

# Deep Ecology Movement for Better Environmentalism with Special Reference to the Role of Self-realization Concept

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**Abstract**—Earth is the only planet, so far known to have an environment that can sustain life. The protection of environment and conservation of resources had emerged as an issue of utmost importance for each and every nation. Environmentalism can be considered as a social movement that mainly concerns for environmental conservation and improving the state of the environment. The new environmentalism in the form of 'deep ecology' emerged to protect the natural resources and eco-systems. Deep ecology is a relatively new and highly ecological movement that arises as a new perception to visualize the inexorable changes that humanity currently confronts. Arne Naess's theory of deep ecology aims to find out a solution to our feeling of emptiness and stress and our current disconnectiveness with nature to its ultimate end where we can regain a feeling of connectedness with other living and non-living entities. Reaching the higher level of awareness is pivotal for deep ecology which will enable us to rebuild the relationship with living and non-living entities. Thus, deep ecology movement aims to participate in overcoming the ecological crisis by developing a process to show the meaning and truth in our lives.

The present paper deals with the deep ecology movement for better environmentalism how we can achieve self-realization, the fundamental norm of deep ecology. Realizing the true self will give the equal rights to every species of this ecosystem to live freely in this biosphere. Naess's 'Self-realization' referred to as an unfolding of the self outwards into the environment and it means moving towards oneness or meaningful life by recognizing the intrinsic value of all biological systems. Thus, with the formula 'Live and Let Live' will derive the norm 'Self-realization' for every being.

**Keywords:** Deep ecology, Environmentalism, Self-realization.

*I am not interested in ethics or morals. I am interested in how we experience the world (Arne Naess, 1986).*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current state of the world is such that there is a need for us to reflect deeply on our relationship with the environment. The protection of environment and conservation of resources had emerged as an issue of utmost importance for each and every nation. Environmentalism can be considered as a social movement that mainly concerns for environmental conservation and improving the state of the environment. The new environmentalism in the form of 'Deep-Ecology' emerged to protect the natural resources and eco-systems.

Deep ecology movement is just a social movement that arises as a new perception to visualize the inexorable changes that humanity currently confronts. The decade of 1960's witnessed strong ecological revolution----- a revolution in consciousness concerning man's outlook towards other species and the need to protect the integrity of nature. This ecological revolution paved very much for the rise of a new ecological movement.

The present paper elaborates about deep ecology and its impact on our environment and is much more helpful for minimizing the environmental crisis. Thus it is believed that the distinctiveness and significance of deep ecology influence many current challenges to transform the old anthropocentric paradigm to ecocentric perspective.

## 2. DEEP ECOLOGY MOVEMENT

Arne Naess, Norwegian philosopher, founding father of environmental philosophy, saw two different forms of environmentalism--one he called "Long-range deep ecology movement" and the other the "Shallow ecology movement". He basically started that there are two ecology movement: the first is concerned with the richness, diversity and intrinsic value of all the natural world (deep ecology), and the second is concerned mostly with pollution, the depletion of natural resources and the usefulness of the Earth for humans (Anthropocentrism).

Arne Naess developed the term 'Deep Ecology' in 1973 in an English article "The Shallow and The Deep, Long Range Deep Ecology Movement: A Summary" where deep ecology is defined as – the humans are only part of this ecology and they should believe that by realizing our unity with nature can bring the full realization of all living forms of this planet. All the living forms of the planet have their own intrinsic values and we should respect those values. It believes that all the human and non-human forms are equal; no one is master of anyone. His whole theory of deep ecology aims to find out a solution to our feeling of emptiness and stress and our current disconnectiveness with nature to its ultimate end where we can regain a feeling of connectedness with other living and non-living entities. Thus, reaching the higher level of awareness is pivotal for deep ecology which will enable us to rebuild the relationship with living and non-living entities. Naess saw

deep ecology as a positive intuition of joy that could give hope and turn the environmental crisis around. The intuitions each person develops as they spend time in nature, expands their ecological consciousness. When a sufficient amount of people partake in such actions then obviously a new level of consciousness can be globally or universally realized. As the intuitions and the ecological consciousness are centered in the deep ecology platform, it is in fact one of the most positive remedy for environmental crisis we are facing today in our life. Naess developed his Deep Ecology environmentalism in such a way that people from all walks of life, from different cultures could be accommodated within its fold. For this he set up a "Deep Ecology platform" and proposed some basic eight ecological principles, for us all.

Thus, Naess (1986) have given certain principles and there are encapsulated in the well known Deep Ecology eight point platform-

- i. The well being and flourishing of human and non-human life as Earth have value in themselves.
- ii. Richness and diversity of live forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
- iii. Human have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
- iv. The flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a sustainably smaller human population.
- v. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive and the situation is rapidly worsening.
- vi. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
- vii. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living.
- viii. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

These principles shifted the idea of biospherical egalitarianism that the concept of both human and non-human life having inherent value. This belief that all beings have intrinsic value was fundamentally a non-anthropocentric one. These principles of deep ecology had many diverse spiritual and political influences. These influences ranged from Eastern religion, to western academic philosophy such as writings of Spinoza. The platform can be endorsed by people from a diversity of religious and philosophical backgrounds. The platform of deep ecology constitutes a basis for creating a balanced way for humanity to live well within nature. Thus, accepting the 'Deep Ecology Platform' Naess proposes that humans should-

- a) Radically reduce the Earth's population.
- b) Abandon all goals of economic growth.

- c) Conserve diversity of species.
- d) Live in small, self-reliant communities.
- e) Touch the Earth lightly.

Thus deep ecology movement assumed that man – environment relation are considered to be very important. The environment that surrounds us should be treated as an integral part of our identity as our family, community and our culture. Deep ecologist wants to eliminate the division that exists between humans and nature and instead encourage humans to accept that they are a part of nature.

These are self-evident truths from an ecocentric perspective. Although many individuals had recognized and stated these truths, the deep ecology platform broke new ground by stating there so badly for our time. The platform breaks taboos in western culture, and therefore not only raises objections but provokes outrage and resistance. But by breaking new ground for ecologically inspired and concerned people in all fields, it opened up the space for deeper analysis and creativity – and it continues to do so. The "deepness" of deep ecology leads one to a deeper connection with life by going to the roots of our environmental crisis by questioning the beliefs, assumptions and ways of thinking values. This search has stimulated profound inquiry in countless fields where paradigm change is now underway.

### 3. SELF-REALIZATION

Deep ecology movement is founded on the basic principles - one is the scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on earth, together with the idea that anthropocentrism – human centeredness is a misguided way of seeing things. Deep ecologists say that an ecocentric attitude is more consistent with the truth about the nature of life on earth.

The second component of deep ecology is 'Self-realization'- the fundamental norm of deep ecology. Arne Naess consider self – realization as a replacement of morality. Everything goes around this fundamental norm of deep ecology. Naess is of the opinion that if we identify ourselves with the non-human world then we are in no need of morality. As Arne Naess has said "I am not interested in ethics or morals. I am interested in how we experience the world." Thus, people should take the environmental affairs as beautiful acts rather than moral acts. It should not be a moral duty that drives the individual to protect the environment, but rather he or she should be naturally inclined to do so, because a defense of nature should develop from a desire for self - defense.

Self-realization is the heart of deep ecology. Realizing the true self will give the equal rights to every species of this ecosystem to live freely in this biosphere. Naess takes 'self-realization' in a comprehensive sense. He distinguishes between the two selves, self (with a capital 'S' with a meaning to the Indian atman and self (with a small's'), meaning individual self. The individual self should achieve the universal self through the diminishing of ego or through the

narrow self. In other words the maxim “everything is interrelated” is realized. Thus, the two basic principles – the diminishing of ego and the integrity between human and the non-human world – constitute Naess’s ultimate norm of ‘self-realization’. By the diminishing of ego he means the gradual reduction of our hedonistic attitude. The integrity principle says that everything in this biosphere is internally connected all organisms are parts of an integrated whole. That is, if we harm any element in this nature, then eventually we harm ourselves.

Naess self-Realization refers to the whole of nature and all the human and non-human individuals that it comprises, realizing itself. Naess’s self-realization involves the identification of the small human self-the personal ego with ever wider wholes. This identification is grounded in a recognition of the metaphysical fact of interconnectedness (Freya Mathew, 1995).

**Rothenberg’s view:** Self-realization is the norm which connects all life forms through the ultimate principle “Life is fundamentally one”. According to Rothenberg (1989), three features of self-realization can be seen as

Firstly, self-realization does not mean self-centeredness because the individual self cannot be isolated from, as well as dissolved into the greater self.

Secondly, self-realization is a process of expanding oneself to realize that are part of nature and other’s interest should be one’s own interests.

Finally, since self-realization is active condition, or a process or a way of life, nobody can ever reach self-realization. Like Nirvana in Buddhism, self-realization is unreachable. It provides us a direction to move towards the self.

**Spinoza’s view:** Naess, the eco-philosopher, interpreted Spinoza’s concept of Self-realization. Spinoza, the god intoxicated philosopher, is treated as the ‘father of ecophilosophy’. Naess was deeply influenced by Spinoza’s ‘Conatus’ meaning ‘to try’ or ‘to strive’. It refers to the basic motivation that is considered to constitute the essence of all things.

‘Conatus’ is therefore typically rendered as ‘Self-Preservation’. Of course, in Spinoza’s Metaphysics, all are united to the whole since there is ultimately one substance reality is a unity, which refer to us ‘God’ or ‘Nature’ (Bertrand Russell, 1979).

In other words, one realizes a large sense of self, his own unfolding becomes more and more bound up with the unfolding of other entities. Spinoza’s philosophy points towards the realization of as expansive a sense of self as possible. Moreover it points towards the worldly realization as expansive a sense of self as possible. Naess interpreted Spinoza’s concept of self-realization –

“..... Spinoza has the view that self-realization leads to self realization. This is because, for human at least, self realization (our conatus) leads us to seek, among other things, and under suitable conditions, to understand the world and our place in it (i.e. reality is a unity, that all entities are modes of a single substance) leads us to identify more widely with the world of which we are a part it leads, in other words, to the realization of more and more expansive sense of self (i.e. self-realization).

**Gandhiji’s view:** Naess is quite influenced by Gandhiji when Gandhiji described his ultimate goal in a way that may eccentric to many of us but somewhere or else it is true. Gandhiji said that it is self-realization that we should strive for. He wanted to clarify the distinction between the ego or the ‘narrow’ self (Jiva) and self (atman). He said that if we want to live a happy and peaceful life, then we have to leave aside our egocentric interest and need to realize universal self- the “atman”. Naess has summarized Gandhiji’s statements in six points in his essay “Self – Realization: An Ecological Approach to being in the world” and they are-

- i. We underestimate ourselves and emphasize ‘self’ which we tend to confuse it with the narrow ego.
- ii. Human nature cannot avoid “identifying” ourselves with all living beings, beautiful or ugly, big or small, sentiment or not.
- iii. Traditionally, self develops through three stages – from ego to social self, comprising the ego, and from there to Metaphysical self, comprising the social self. But ‘nature’ where we belong are largely ignored. Then the concept of ‘ecological self’ was introduced. Both society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in its constitutive relations. These relations are not only relations we have with humans and the human community but with the layer community of all living beings.
- iv. Through self-realization joy of life and meaning of life is increased.
- v. With the growing maturity and identification with others, the self is widened and depend. We “see our self in others”. Self –realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered. Thus, going with the formula – “Live and let live” will derive the norm “Self-realization for every being” and by overcoming the obstacles of our life by assisting in the self-realization of others.
- vi. A great challenge of today is to save our planet from further demonstration that violated both the enlightened self-interest of humans and non humans and decreases the potential of Joyful existence for all (Naess, 1987).

Thus, Gandhiji was a deep ecologist in the sense that he did not value nature because it was useful to man but because it was the creation of God and hence must remain as pristine as possible. His ultimate goal is attainment of Moksa or Self-realization i.e. freedom from all ills and merging with nature

as part of it. According to him, it is the universal self the 'atman' that has to be realized. With the attainment of Moksha or self-realization, living beings is intimately connected with the nature. Therefore, the potentials of Gandhian holistic view of the world and his principles of Deep Ecology can be used as guiding principles, for finding solutions for a new eco-friendly world order.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The current world view in today's society is an anthropocentric perspective. This perspective shows that humans are here to protect and control the environment to meet their own needs and uses. Thus ecological crisis can be seen which requires a deep sense in our form of life. Deep ecology movement aims to participate in overcoming the ecological crisis by developing a process to show the meaning of truth in our lives. The deep ecology practice is that of an eco-centric point of view. Being connected to one's environment and habitat are key factors to the deep ecology perspective and having this connection, we as humans are able to understand the complex dynamics between our relationships with our environment. Thus, by implementing this practice of the *Deep Ecology Platform* and exploring our ecological self, it is an aspect of what Arne Naess calls 'all around maturity, of self-Realization'. The joy and meaning of life is enhanced through increased self-realization, through the fulfillment of each being's potential. Naess saw the process of self-realization as the realization that the human self is part of the wider ecological community and this can be realized by replacing anthropocentric forms of thinking to eco-centric forms of thinking. In order to realize our ecological self, it is necessary to realize the self of other beings. Then only we can shift from egoism to altruism.

Once we 'see ourselves in other' in this broad way our natural inclination is to protect the Earth:

"..... care flows naturally if the self is widened and depend so that protecting of free nature is felt and conceived of as protection of our very selves."

Thus, Immanuel Kant gave a pair of concepts live harmoniously in, for and of nature, the concept of moral act

and beautiful act. Moral acts are always motivated by moral laws and then it becomes our moral duty to perform it whether we like it or not. Sometimes it goes against our inclination but we are bound to do it by our respect for moral law. If we do something only because of moral law then the outcome our satisfaction decreases. And if we do what is right with our inclination and happiness then it turns into a beautiful act. So it is clear that as Arne Naess says that people should take the environmental affairs as a beautiful act rather than the moral acts. Until and unless, their efforts for nature will be out of their inclination they will never give justice to their self and nature too. Then only by realization of our true self we can derive the norm "Self-realization" for every being where we can increasingly see ourselves in others and others in ourselves.

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